

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----015425 282018Z /47

O 281928Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2254
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 4211

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: IS, US, EG, XF, PEPR, PGOV
SUBJ: BEGIN'S MOOD

1. SINCE RETURNING FROM WASHINGTON SATURDAY NIGHT, I HAVE HAD THREE OPPORTUNITIES TO OBSERVE PRIME MINISTER BEGIN CLOSELY, ONE AT A LARGE DINNER HE GAVE FOR THE TIME/LIFE STUDY GROUP OF TOP U.S. EXECUTIVES AT WHICH HE BOTH SPOKE AND ANSWERED QUESTIONS, ONCE IN A LENGTHY AND DIFFICULT PRIVATE MEETING WITH SENATOR JAVITS, AND TODAY (MARCH 28) IN A BRIEF PRIVATE CHAT WHILE WE WERE WAITING FOR ANOTHER AMERICAN VISITOR TO ARRIVE. HE IS DEFINITELY IN A STATE OF CONSIDERABLE DEPRESSION AS A RESULT OF HIS TALKS IN WASHINGTON. VERY SOBER AND PREOCCUPIED, FREQUENTLY WITHDRAWN, MORE DIFFICULT TO CONVERSE WITH THAN I HAVE SEEN HIM, AND VISIBLY ATTEMPTING TO PUT THE BEST FACE POSSIBLE ON HIS OWN VERY GLOOMY MOOD, BEGIN GIVES EVERY APPEARANCE OF A MAN WHO HAS BEEN BADLY

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SHAKEN. BOTH PUBLICLY AND EVEN MORE IN PRIVATE, HE RETURNS OVER AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN TO THE "INJUSTICE" WHICH HE SEES IN THE WAY IN WHICH WE HAVE "ABANDONED" HIS PEACE PLANS. HE SEEMS TO BE LOOKING INWARD INTO HIS OWN THOUGHTS EVEN WHILE CONVERSING; HE REPEATS ALL OF HIS FAMILIAR THEMES WITH ELOQUENCE AND ROTE PERSISTENCE IN A FASHION MORE PLEADING IN TONE THAN WAS FORMERLY THE

CASE, ALMOST BEGGING THE HEARER TO ADMIT THAT HE HAS BEEN UNFAIRLY TREATED BY THE U.S. BUT HE SHOWS NOT THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF BEGINNING TO RETHINK ANY OF HIS POSITIONS IN LIGHT OF WHAT HE HEARD IN WASHINGTON. ON THE CONTRARY, HE ONLY REASSERTS THEM WITH A MORE PERSISTENT, IMPORTUNATE TONE.

2. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY STRIKING IN THE MEETING WITH SENATOR JAVITS. JAVITS URGED BEGIN WITH GREAT FORCE AND ELOQUENCE TO PUT HIS EMOTIONS AND HIS FEELING OF HAVING BEEN MISTREATED BEHIND HIM, AS "ANY MAN IN POLITICAL LIFE MUST," AND FOCUS ON WHAT MUST BE DONE TO MODIFY HIS PEACE PROPOSALS IF THEY ARE TO AGAIN BE THE SUBJECT OF SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. JAVITS BLUNTLY EXPLAINED TO BEGIN WHY "THE FAVORABLE WORDS ABOUT HIS PEACE PLANS IN DECEMBER DISAPPEARED IN MARCH." JAVITS ATTRIBUTED THE CHANGE IN U.S. ATTITUDE TO A LOSS OF ISRAELI CREDIBILITY FROM THEIR ILL-ADVISED ACTIONS INVOLVING SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF 242. JAVITS TALKED LIKE A KINDLY DUTCH UNCLE TO BEGIN FOR THE BETTER PART OF AN HOUR ABOUT ISRAEL'S DECLINING POSITION IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEED TO REASS-ESS SOME OF HIS POSITIONS IF IT IS TO BE ARRESTED. DESPITE THE PATIENCE AND ATTENTION HE DEMONSTRATED IN HEARING JAVITS OUT, BEGIN'S RESPONSES SUGGESTED THAT HE HAD BEEN LISTENING MOST OF THE TIME TO SOME INNER DRUMMER. HE RETURNED TO THE THEME OF INJUSTICE, AND SEEMED INCAPABLE AT LEAST AT THAT MOMENT OF
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THINKING CONSTRUCTIVELY ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO DEAL WITH THE THREATENING POLITICAL SITUATION JAVITS DESCRIBED.

3. ALSO NOTICEABLE ON EACH OF THESE OCCASIONS HAS BEEN BEGIN'S PHYSICAL FRAILTY. HE GIVES TELLTALE INDICATIONS OF SOME CHEST PAIN, SEEMS TIRED AND DEPRESSED, AND IS OBVIOUSLY A MAN UNDER CONSIDERABLE EMOTIONAL TENSION. BUT THERE IS NO LACK OF DETERMINATION EVIDENT. HE ACTS LIKE A MAN WHO HAS BEEN WRONGED, NOT A MAN WHO ADMITS HIMSELF TO HAVE BEEN WRONG. AND THIS DISTINCTION SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED.
LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PEACE, NEGOTIATIONS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV04211
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: P840157-1952, N780004-0063
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780316/aaaaanre.tel
Line Count: 106
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 162efebbb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3177523
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CHANGED> MCM 20040617
Subject: BEGIN'S MOOD
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, IS, US, EG, XF, (JAVITS, JACOB), (BEGIN, MENACHEM)
To: STATE SS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/162efebbb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014